



KEYNOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto

The Evanston Symphony Orchestra continues the 2022–2023 season on April 2 at 2:30 p.m. at Pick-Staiger. On the program is a piece written by a female composer in the 1990s inspired by a play about events in the 1660s; Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 5 "Reformation;" and Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 featuring soloist Kariné Poghosyan.

In 1989, Linda Robbins Coleman was commissioned to write *In Good King Charles's Golden Days—A Symphonic Overture*, which premiered in 1995. She aimed to capture the spirit of George Bernard Shaw's play that took place in the English court during the reign of Charles II of England (1660–1685).

To capture the spirit of the play, Coleman made important creative decisions. "First, to evoke a sense of the late 17th century, I felt the use of a harpsichord was mandatory. Since the play veered into 20th-century ideas, including quantum physics, I wanted to include modern musical ideas as well."

Felix Mendelssohn was a musical prodigy from a very young age. Mendelssohn's family helped cultivate his talents beyond music, including lessons in literature and painting. During his boyhood, he composed 5 operas, 11 symphonies for string orchestra, concerti, and sonatas.

Mendelssohn wrote his Symphony No. 5 "Reformation" in 1830 to celebrate the anniversary of the Protestant Reformation not with a choral work but with a four-movement symphony. You may recognize six softly played rising notes, based on the Dresden Amen. Light-hearted themes come to life resembling a dance shared by various sections of the orchestra. A thrilling finale is based on the Lutheran hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is our God." With increasingly faster variations, the excitement builds to a spectacular finish with the orchestra playing the triumphant ending to Mendelssohn's celebration of the Reformation.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky wrote his Piano Concerto No. 1 over a span of four months in 1874–1875. He wanted Nikolai Rubinstein to play the piece for its premiere;

SUNDAY, APRIL 2

— 2:30 PM

TCHAIKOVSKY
FIRST PIANO CONCERTO



however, Rubinstein did not like the piece and refused to play it unless it was heavily edited. Tchaikovsky did not want to make any significant changes to his work, so he reached out to Hans von Bülow, who admired the piece and agreed to play it.

The concerto premiered in October 1875 in Boston when von Bülow was on tour in the United States. While the piece was a hit with the audience, the critics were not thrilled. After the Russian premiere in November, Tchaikovsky made a few edits even though the piece was already in print. In 1879, a revised version of the full score was published, but more revisions followed. Tchaikovsky decided to edit the concerto a final time in 1888, which is the version the ESO will play for our concerts.

Administrative notes: The ESO strongly recommends our audience wear masks. Proof of vaccination is not currently required. These measures are subject to public health recommendations. As always, our free Musical Insights program will feature Maestro Eckerling and soloist Kariné Poghosyan for an insider's tour of the history and highlights behind the music on Friday, March 31, at 1:30 at The Merion's Crystal Ballroom. 🎧



MUSICAL INSIGHTS

FRIDAY, MARCH 31, 2023

1:30 PM

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BEHIND THE SCENES



I've been thinking a lot lately about "relevance" in music. That word gets tossed around a lot among groups that are advocating for inclusion of neglected groups of composers and performers. And they use the "R" word to try to bolster their point of view by saying that doing "this music" is relevant and this other music by a "DWM" (Dead, White Male) composer is not relevant.

This point was on full display in the recent movie "Tár," about a female conductor in the music business. The scene was a masterclass where an African American cellist wasn't interested in Bach because music by a "dead, white male" wasn't relevant to him. The conductor strongly emphasized how important Bach is. The cellist got angry, packed up his cello, and walked out.

I wish the script had called for the conductor to make a different argument, one of lineage. It is highly likely that music the cellist thought WAS relevant had been affected by influence from another composer. And it is likely that that "other composer" was also influenced by other composers. It is hard to imagine that the music of Bach (and particularly his cello suites) didn't have lineage (and therefore a connection) to other cello music that did speak to the cellist in question.

This is why I think that all music has relevance. But it is sometimes up to the performer, and the listener, to find the relevance and the connection.

Still, there are important, compelling reasons why we need to play music with a wider spectrum of ethnicities. As we do, we are all richer for it. But it doesn't mean that other music isn't relevant. Because it is, or it can be, if we allow it to be so. 🎵

—Lawrence Eckerling
Music Director, Evanston Symphony Orchestra

Musical Insights is generously sponsored by The Merion. **We appreciate their continuing support. Please read about what The Merion has to offer.**



Evanston's premier senior living community, The Merion, offers active older adults the opportunity to retire in style. Situated in vibrant downtown Evanston, and only a few blocks from Lake Michigan, The Merion allows seniors to enjoy the best of what our area offers right outside their door—all while delighting in a truly worry-free rental lifestyle within our community.

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Even better, enjoy the peace of mind and freedom of knowing care is available, if or when you need it, through MerionCares, our health services program. This program provides access to services that help you age in place, right in the community and area you love.

Call 847-562-5318 or visit MerionEvanston.com to schedule a tour and learn more about The Merion. 🎵



THE MERION



Kariné Poghosyan: from Armenia to America



Kariné Poghosyan was born in Yerevan, Armenia, into an artistic family, although not a musical one. Her father was a well-known visual artist who wanted to make the world a better place, and Kariné has fond memories of “growing up in an artist’s studio, with the smell of oil paints.” Her mother’s art was of a different type; she was a prominent civil engineer, but during the Armenian-Azerbaijani war in the mid-1990s decided to step back from public life, a decision that let her begin painting as well, although her preferred medium is watercolor.

When she was seven, Kariné dutifully joined the stream of little Armenian girls who were beginning piano lessons, in her case at School of the Arts No. 1 in Yerevan. She describes it as “a wonderful music school,” but says that her first teacher was not a happy fit. “In fact, I hated the lessons! I much preferred ‘noodling’ on the piano, while she insisted I concentrate on the dreaded études. Our personalities were quite different!” This relationship lasted for several years, competent, but not quite in sync, with Kariné not really enjoying the piano. Then, when Kariné was 13 or so, the teacher left Armenia for a job abroad and a new teacher arrived in Kariné’s life. “This new teacher turned me around,” Kariné said. “Something sparked!” Decisions made themselves and there was no stopping her!

After her orchestral debut at 14 performing Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 1, and further studies in Romanos Melikian College as well as Komitas State Conservatory, Kariné immigrated to the US with her family in 1998 so that she could study with Professor Françoise Regnat at California State University Northridge. She received her BM *summa cum laude*.

After graduation, Prof. Regnat urged Kariné to go to New York, specifically to the Manhattan School of Music, to continue her studies. So, the family packed all of their belongings, including a piano, into a U-Haul trailer and set off for the East Coast—but there was a problem. Kariné was due to perform at her new school the day after their arrival in New York. How could she give a credible performance if she had not practiced for almost a week as the family made its way east? Her father came up with an ingenious solution. Rather than load the piano at the front of the trailer, which is what U-Haul recommended, he saved the piano for last and loaded it facing the rear doors. He stabilized the piano with boxes, straps, and other pieces of furniture, then created a sort of “nest” just large enough for Kariné right inside the doors. And at every rest stop, meal stop, and motel stop from California to New York, Kariné would climb into the “nest” and practice. We can only imagine the reaction of fellow travelers who, in crossing a humdrum parking lot, suddenly heard beautiful classical music pouring out of the back of a U-Haul trailer! But it worked, and Kariné performed successfully at the Manhattan School of Music just a day after arriving in the Big Apple.

Kariné’s career in New York soared. She made her debut at Carnegie Hall at age 25, finished her MM degree in two years and followed that immediately by earning her DMA two years later, a remarkably short period of time for a doctoral degree. Her thesis, appropriately enough, was on Armenia’s “Aram Khachaturian for Piano.” In addition to maintaining a full performance schedule, Kariné currently teaches at her alma mater on both the collegiate and pre-collegiate faculties.

Since establishing herself professionally in New York, Kariné has developed a reputation on the world stage for her “ability to get to the heart of the works she performs.” Her most recent concerts include two sold-out recitals at Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall, the second of which was a CD

Release concert of her “Rachmaninoff and Stravinsky” recording on Centaur Records. This recording has since garnered rave reviews, with Gramophone Magazine praising its “masterly textural layering and resounding climaxes,” and the American Record Guide stating that “a more heroic program would be hard to find, and few could play as well as the Armenian-American Poghosyan.”

Oscar-winning screenwriter Alex Dinelaris said, “Listening to and watching Kariné Poghosyan play fills one with life and energy. The combination of her formidable skill and her unchecked passion is an experience I recommend for anyone who needs to be reminded of the artist and art within themselves.”

Kariné weathered the pandemic by “going public.” Beginning in the first week of the lockdown, she launched weekly livestream mini-concerts on her Facebook page with an entirely new 15-minute program each week, and kept these concerts going for her worldwide audience for 100 straight weeks! These concerts received coverage from Katie Couric’s newsletter *Wake-up Call*, an article in the Pianist Magazine, and other outlets.

On April 2 Kariné Poghosyan will perform Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto No. 1 in B Flat Minor with the Evanston Symphony. When we asked her to tell us about this glorious piece of music, the phone positively crackled with enthusiasm! “This is such a special piece for me!” she said. “In fact, it was *the* piece in Yerevan! One evening my parents were watching Van Cliburn on TV. I couldn’t believe my eyes! I ran to the piano and tried playing like him, but was of course in the wrong key! (I was very young...). My dad went out and bought me a score, a Soviet-published score, which is the same one I still use. It reconnects me with the spark from when I was 13...”

The ESO is delighted to welcome this talented Armenian-American pianist—and her Soviet era score—to our stage! 🎻

—Kelly Brest van Kempen

ESO 50 Years of Service—Gloria Boyell and Ellen Morris

It was 1973. Richard Nixon was sworn in as President for the second time. Chicago's Sears Tower was completed, making it the tallest building in the world. NASA's first space station, Skylab, was launched. At the top of the pop music charts was "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree," by Tony Orlando and Dawn. And violinists Gloria Boyell and Ellen Morris successfully auditioned for the Evanston Symphony Orchestra.

Gloria had recently moved to Glencoe. She had been playing chamber music in addition to her career as a piano teacher. Ellen was moving back to the area after attending Goucher college in Baltimore, and she would soon begin law school at John Marshall Law School. Neither could have foreseen that this was the start of 50 straight years of playing with the ESO. Both agree that, over the years, the ESO has grown in stature and expanded its positive influence on the community.

We recently spent a little time with each of them to reflect on their journeys. Following are excerpts from each of those conversations.



Gloria Boyell

What do you love most about the ESO?

Making music with others is the greatest joy in life. I love bringing great music to life with a wonderful orchestra.

It has been such a joy, and I am grateful to have 50 years of such memorable experiences. What an amazing opportunity for all of us to be able to do this together.

Who has been your favorite ESO soloist?

In November of 1976, Contralto Isola Jones sang with us. Her voice was so velvety, that I just melted. She had studied at Northwestern and then she went on to sing with *The Metropolitan Opera* in New York, for 16 seasons. We were so lucky to perform with her and I'll never forget it.

Who are your favorite composers?

There are so many great composers. Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer* is beautiful. And Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2, which we recently played with soloist Irina Muresanu, is so moving. The second movement brought tears to my eyes. I love it all.

What are your other passions?

Besides my love of music, I also love the outdoors. I swim in Lake Michigan every morning during the summer, and like to take long walks. Over the years I have also enjoyed cross-country skiing and biking. Of course, I also love being connected to my extended family.

Thanks to all our loyal supporters, the Evanston Symphony Orchestra is back to a full schedule of live classical music concerts in our 2022–2023 season. Our outdoor pops concert at Gillson Park last summer and our Holiday concert at Evanston Township High School attracted record audiences and brought more people together to share the joy of music. Our four-concert series shines a spotlight on women—both composers and soloists!

These concerts are only possible because of the dedication and talent of our musicians who volunteer their time to work under the direction of Maestro Eckerling and concertmaster, Julie Fischer. Many musicians have been with us for a good number of years. This year we are celebrating the 50th anniversaries of two ESO second violinists—Gloria Boyell and Ellen Morris.

We are delighted to celebrate their anniversaries. To make this extra special, friends and family of both violinists have put up a matching gift opportunity—a challenge of \$6,000. You can help ESO meet this challenge and celebrate our long-time members by making your gift to the ESO by June 1 and it will be matched dollar-for-dollar! Congratulations, Gloria and Ellen!



Ellen Morris

What do you love most about the ESO?

I love being a part of the orchestra. Playing music is just a part of me. I have been playing since I was 8 years old and cannot imagine ever not playing. I also really value that the ESO offers a venue for people to hear

high-quality music without having to make a trip to downtown Chicago, or to pay a hefty price. I love that we provide a wonderful community resource to Evanston and the surrounding areas. Providing a service to the community is really important to me—both in music and in my career as a lawyer.

How has ESO changed your life?

Much of my life is scheduled around the orchestra. My vacations are planned around rehearsals and concerts. The only time I've ever missed is for major family events like my son's wedding. ESO has also become a focal point for my family. When my children were young, they would come to concerts and enjoy snacks with the orchestra. Now that they are grown, my daughter also plays violin in the ESO, and my grandchildren are among our audience members. My husband loves attending and has not missed a concert since we met in 2001. My son also attends.

What are your other joys related to music?


My violin is one of my most valued possessions. I took music really seriously in high school, and attended Interlochen Arts Camp for 5 summers as a student and 3 summers as staff. When I graduated from high school my parents decided to give me a new violin. My music teacher helped me find the instrument that I still play today. It was made by a modern Italian violin maker, Sesto Rocchi, who lived in Reggio Emilia, Italy. A few years after purchasing the instrument, I had the honor of visiting him at his house. And the gift of my violin brings me great joy to this day. 🎻

Celebrate the Evanston Symphony Orchestra in its 76th Season with your gift to the 2023 Annual Fund!

The ESO is proud of its commitment to quality performances, engagement with community partners and outreach to Evanston's youngest, most vulnerable students and also seniors. We make live classical concerts accessible to all and enrich people's lives with music! We performed a second free outdoor concert at The Wallace Bowl in Gillson Park last August which attracted a crowd of over 1,200. Our Holiday concert in December was a glorious celebration of community with six diverse arts groups performing to an audience of 1,400.

Of course, the ESO does much more than perform concerts. We are proud of our free music education program, Music In Your World, which you can read about inside *KeyNotes*. We reach out to music lovers with Musical Insights, our free pre-concert programs on Friday afternoons in downtown Evanston before each concert; everyone is welcome! Musical Insights expands patrons' musical understanding and enriches their concert experience. Around 300 seniors receive a free monthly packet of "brain activities," including ESO's *HighNotes*, a 24-page booklet of musical articles, puzzles, jokes, reminiscences, and links to online performances. This amazing booklet is produced by an ESO board member. At concerts we are happy to hand out special large-type programs, as well as *KidNotes*, program notes designed specifically for our younger audience members.

The ESO is a true community orchestra that touches the hearts and minds of people from 2 to 102! We hope that you share our pride in the many contributions our orchestra has made to our community. Please consider a tax-deductible gift to the Evanston Symphony Orchestra's 2023 Annual Fund.

Thank you! 

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